

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO INDIAN OCEAN COLLECTIVE

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USCIMCEUR

CINCLANT

CINC PAC

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MILITARY ADDEES ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652:

TAGS: PARM, XO

SUBJECT: US-SOVIET INDIAN OCEAN TALKS

REFERENCE: STATE 304281 (NOTAL); STATE 302525

1. FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN DECEMBER 22 WASHINGTON

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POST:

- THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S TALKS WITH THE SOVIET
UNION ON THE INDIAN OCEAN SEEM TO HAVE STRUCK AN
EMBARRASING SNAG. THE PRESIDENT, YOU WILL RECALL, EARLY
ON SOUGHT NEGOTIATIONS TO "COMPLETELY DEMILITARIZE" THAT
SPRAWLING REGION. IT WAS NOT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD

BEEN FULLY BRIEFED ON THE MILITARY ACTIVITIES THE UNITED STATES CONDUCTS THERE: A \$100-MILLION BASE IS BEING BUILT ON THE ISLAND OF DIEGO GARCIA, CARRIER TASK FORCES AND MISSILE-CARRYING SUBMARINES MOVE IN FROM TIME TO TIME, AND ARRANGEMENTS EXIST WITH VARIOUS STATES TO PATROL THE SEA LANES THROUGH WHICH AMERICA-BOUND OIL PASSES. BY CONTRAST, THE RUSSIANS SAIL SMALL SURFACE SHIPS AROUND WHERE THEY CAN. ONLY, IT APPEARS, WHEN THIS DISCREPANCY IN USAGE WAS RECOGNIZED AT THE WHITE HOUSE WERE OUR NEGOTIATING GOALS REDUCED FROM "COMPLETE DEMILITARIZATION" TO "MUTUAL MILITARY RESTRAINT."

- THE RUSSIANS, HOWEVER, HAVE TOSSED IN A LITTLE MONKEY WRENCH. THEY RECENTLY LOST THEIR MAJOR LITTORAL FOOTHOLD, IN SOMALIA. SINCE BEING THROWN OUT, IT IS REPORTED, THEY HAVE DECIDED THAT IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION; WHAT'S NEEDED IS TO REDUCE THE BIG-POWER MILITARY PRESENCE AND, SPECIFICALLY, TO EXCLUDE NUCLEAR-POWERED VESSELS. SUCH RESTRICTIONS WOULD BEAR CONSIDERABLY MORE HEAVILY ON THE UNITED STATES, WHICH CONDUCTS MOST OF THE SIGNIFICANT MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE REGION. SO IT IS THAT SOME OFFICIALS ARE NOW SAID TO FEEL THAT NO AGREEMENT IS POSSIBLE UNLESS THE SOVIET FLEET ONCE AGAIN ACHIEVES A SECURE FOOTHOLD IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. IN OTHER WORDS, THE NEGOTIATION CAN'T MOVE FORWARD UNTIL MOSCOW INCREASES ITS NAVAL PRESENCE--A UNCLASSIFIED

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CURIOUS POSITION FOR A NEGOTIATION AIMED AT LIMITATIONS TO BE IN.

- WELL, IT'S EARLY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN TALKS, TOO EARLY, NO DOUBT, TO CONCLUDE THAT THIS SNAG CAN'T BE OVERCOME. THE SUBJECT IS A NEW ONE IN BIG-POWER DIALOGUE; THERE IS MUCH TO LEARN. NAVIES MAY LOVE NAVAL COMPETITION, BUT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WOULD APPEAR TO SHARE AN INTEREST IN MINIMIZING IT, IN SEEING THAT THE EXISTING COMPETITION DOES NOT PROVOKE EXCESSIVE POLITICAL TENSIONS, AND IN HEADING OFF AN UNNECESSARY NAVAL ARMS RACE.

- IF NAVAL COMPETITION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN IS REALLY ALL THAT SERIOUS, HOWEVER, THEN THE UNITED STATES MAY HAVE REASON TO CONSIDER WHAT STEPS IT COULD TAKE ON ITS OWN. THE DIEGO GARCIA BASE, FOR INSTANCE, WAS UNDERTAKEN ON GROUNDS THAT THE RUSSIANS ALREADY HAD A BASE AT BERBERA IN SOMALIA. NOW BERBERA IS WIPED OUT, BUT WORK PROCEEDS APACE AT DIEGO GARCIA. IT WOULD BE IRONIC --AND INDEFENSIBLE--IF NEGOTIATIONS WERE TO BECOME A COVER FOR THE FURTHER ONE-SIDED MILITARIZATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN.

2. DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN READ FOLLOWING STATEMENT
AT DECEMBER 22 BRIEFING:

- RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL NEWS STORIES
SUGGESTING THAT THE US-SOVIET TALKS ON INDIAN OCEAN ARMS
LIMITATIONS HAVE HIT A SNAG AND THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE
RAISED UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTIES. THESE REPORTS ARE
INACCURATE. THE TALKS HAVE BEEN POSITIVE AND IN THE
RECENT ROUND OF TALKS IN BERN WE CONTINUED TO MAKE
PROGRESS. NATURALLY THERE REMAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
THE TWO SIDES, BUT BOTH SIDES ARE MAKING EFFORTS TO

NARROW THESE DIFFERENCES.

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3. IN ADDITION, PRESS SPOKESMAN ANSWERED FOLLOWING
QUESTIONS:

- Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFICS AS TO WHICH OF THE
MANY REPORTS YOU'RE REFERRING TO?

- A. I'M NOT GOING TO DETAIL THEM. THERE HAVE BEEN A
COUPLE. LET ME JUST SAY THAT I CAN'T GO INTO ALL THE
DETAILS. I WOULD SIMPLY SAY ON BACKGROUND, FOR INSTANCE,
THE SUGGESTION THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SEEKING THE EXCLUSION
OF ALL NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS FROM THE AREA IS INCORRECT,
AND I'M NOT GOING TO TRY TO GO DOWN THE WHOLE LIST OF
THEM, BUT THAT PARTICULAR NOTION. END BACKGROUND.

- Q. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT THE DIFFERENCES REMAINING
ARE?

- A. NO, I CAN'T GO INTO THE SPECIFIC DIFFERENCES.

- Q. ONE OF THE POINTS THAT WAS RAISED IN AN EDITORIAL
THIS MORNING WAS THAT BECAUSE THE SOVIETS HAVE LOST THEIR
BASE AT SOMALIA, THE SITUATION IS NOW UNEQUAL. IS THAT
INCORRECT?

- A. WHILE IT'S CLEAR THAT ANY KIND OF CHANGE IN THE
SITUATION WOULD IMPACT ON THE NEGOTIATIONS, THE FEELING
OF THE NEGOTIATORS IS THAT THE RECENT EVENTS IN BERBERA
HAVE NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED THE COURSE OF THE TALKS.

- Q. CAN YOU CONFIRM THAT THE BASIC NEGOTIATING
POSTURE OF BOTH SIDES IS THAT THE PRESENT LEVELS WOULD
BE MAINTAINED AND NOT EXCEEDED?

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- A. AS YOU UNDERSTAND, WHAT WE HAVE BEEN AIMING AT IS TO SEEK, FIRST, TO STABILIZE THE UNITED STATES AND SOVIET PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. ONCE THIS AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED, THE UNITED STATES IS PREPARED, FOLLOWING SUCH AN AGREEMENT, TO CONSIDER MUTUAL REDUCTIONS IN FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. BUT THAT IS A SECOND STEP.

- Q. WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO AGREEMENT YET ON THE STABILIZATION AT THE PRESENT LEVELS?

- A. WE HAVE NOT COME TO AN AGREEMENT.

- Q. CAN YOU SAY IN WHICH AREAS THE DIFFERENCES WERE NARROWED BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES?

- A. I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GO INTO THE SPECIFICS ON THAT, I'M SORRY.

- Q. IF I CAN FOLLOW THAT UP, YOU'RE SEEKING STABILIZATION AS TO THE LEVEL, ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THE NUMBER OF SHIPS OF CERTAIN TYPES?

- A. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT OUR PRESENCE THERE, TO SEE THAT THERE IS NO EXPANSION OF THE MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

- Q. DOES STABILIZATION IMPLY EQUALIZATION?

- A. STABILIZATION, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, MEANS RETENTION OF THE STATUS QUO.

- Q. BY EACH SIDE AT ITS CURRENT LEVEL?

- A. YES. VANCE

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